Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore (INDU)

Establishment: November 5, 1966

Designations: National Lakeshore, Class II airshed.

Purpose and significant statements important to ecological monitoring:

- Preserve, maintain, and restore the integrity and character of the natural resources and processes.
- The lakeshore contains exceptional biological diversity and outstanding floral richness, resulting from the combination of complex geological processes and the convergence of several major North American life zones.
- The lakeshore offers outstanding opportunities for scientific research due to the diversity and complexity of its natural systems, and it provides a dynamic laboratory for early plant succession and faunal studies.

General Description: Indiana Dunes runs about 25 miles along southern Lake Michigan and includes 15,000 acres. Biological diversity is one of the most significant features of the lakeshore and a primary reason for its establishment. This diversity is greater than most areas of similar size because Indiana Dunes is in several ecological transition zones, including where northern conifer forests meet the temperate hardwood forests and tallgrass prairies of the Midwest. Diverse habitat types include: beaches, bogs, prairies, black oak savannas, forests, wetlands, and marshes. The lakeshore is comprised of unconsolidated soils on which landforms range from open beach and active dunes to stabilized and extensively vegetated older dunes and moraines. Some dunes, like Mount Baldy, rise to heights of over 100 feet above the shoreline.

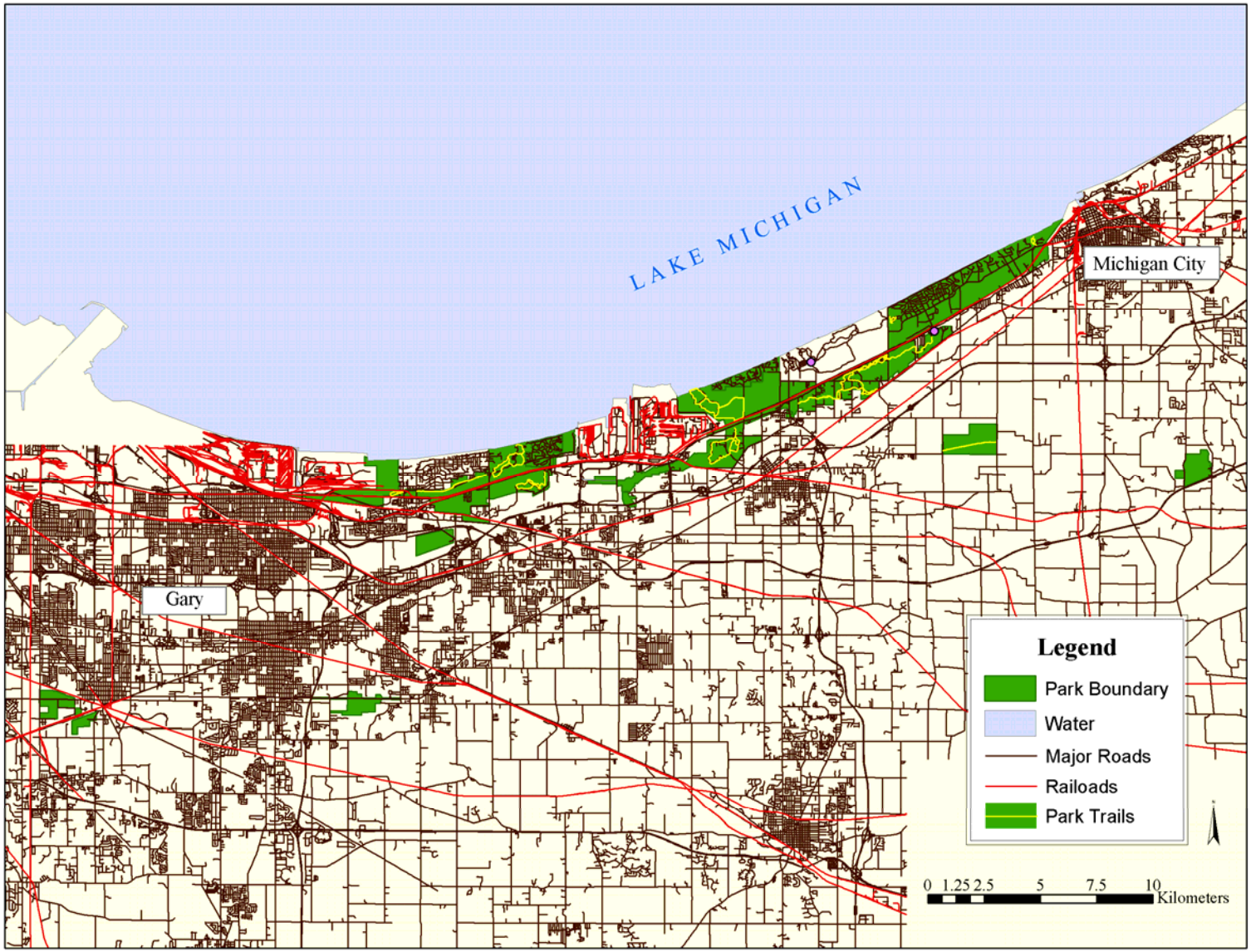
Visitation and human uses: The park provides both passive and active recreation for its visitors, including the 8.5 million people who live within 90 minutes of the park. Visitors come primarily to view the dunes, hike, picnic, and swim along the beaches.

Critical resources: The park serves as a home to the federally listed Karner blue butterfly (*Lycaeides melissa samuelis*) and Pitcher's thistle (*Cersium pitcheri*). The national lakeshore also provides a chance to preserve important rare plant communities.

Primary threats: Indiana Dunes is a classic example of a park that is an island of habitat surrounded by industry, transportation corridors, agriculture, and municipalities. Roads, ditches, and other barriers disrupt natural ecosystem processes within the park. Lakeshore erosion, exotic species, and air pollutants are also major concerns.

Important management documents: The General Management Plan was completed in 1997. The Resource Management Plan was completed 1999.

For important park monitoring reports see Supplemental Document #3



Map of Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore and surrounding area.